The Christian Thank-Offering.

98

A Brief Discourse

ON

The Returns of *Gratitude* & *Obedience* Whereto MEN are Obliged, by the Mercies OF GOD,

Made

On a Solemn THANKSGIVING, kept in a Private Meeting of Christians, on the Occasion of some Deliverances.

By Cotton Mather.

How Happy were my part
If some kind man would thrust his Heart
Into these Lines: till in Heavens Court of Rolls
They were by winged Souls
Entred for both, far above their Desert,
Herbert, Pag. 98.

BOSTON, in N. E. Printed by *B. Green*, & *J. Allen*, for *Michael Perry*, at his Shop at the Town-House. 1696.

A Preparatory Thanksgiving-Song, fetch'd from the Beginning and Conclusion of the Hundred and Third Psalm.

Awake, my Soul, *Awake*, and *Bleſs*
JEHOVAH the moſt *Bleſſed* One:
Bleſs Him, and His Bleſt *Holineſs*
Let all my *Inward Powers* own.
The *Glories* of that Lord, my Soul,
Confeſs with *Praiſes*, juſt and high;
And His vaſt *Benefits* Extol
With a moſt Thankful *Memory*.

Tho' thy *Sins* have His Wrath incurr'd
He does thoſe Horrid *Sins* Forgive;
And tho' thy *Sins* have thee procur'd
Diſeaſes, *Theſe* He does Relieve.
He does from *Deaths* and *Hells* dark place
Thy *Life*, though Forfeited, *Redeem*:
And with Rich Mercies of His *Grace*,
Thou art, How Richly! *Crown'd* by Him.

Thy *Mouth* did never Wiſely Crave
That *Good*, which He would not afford.
Such *Bowels* as our *Fathers* have,
And *more* than *ſuch* are in the Lord.

O ye Bright *Angels*, who tranſcend
In *Might*, ſhow with your *Might* abroad,
While ye His *Will* and *Voice* attend,
The Praiſe of our *Almighty* God.
Armies of *Angels*, that Obey
The *Great* Gods only *Son* and *Heir*,
His *Greatneſs*, Oh! *Gladly* Diſplay:
You and We, His *Glad Servants* are.

All He has *made*, throughout His whole
Dominion too, Let all Adore
Their *Maker*: But, O Thou, my Soul,
Bear part with them for-ever-more.

THE Christian Thank-Offering.

I *Beſeech You, Bretheren, by the Mercies of God,* that you now give your Serious Attention, unto the *Returns* which you are to make for thoſe *Mercies,* declared in

ROM. XII. 1.

I beſeech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that yee preſent your Bodies, a Living Sacrifice, Holy, Acceptable unto God: Your Reaſonable Service.

AS *Reaſonable* a Thing certainly, as ever was propoſed, in the World!

Chriſtians, I have ſet before you, a paſſage of Sacred Scripture, worthy to be *Written,* as once the whole *New Teſtament* whereof this is a part, was upon the Walls of a German Monaſtery, *In Letters of Gold*; Yea, to be *Written* on the *Fleſhly Tables* of our *Hearts* for ever.

We find this paſſage, in an Epiſtle Directed unto the *Apoſtolical* Church of *Rome,* and an Epiſtle, which inſiſting on that Great Article of *Juſtification* only by Faith in the Obedience of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which is the main Thing

denyed by the present Church of *Rome*; and on the Conversion of the *Israelitish Nation*, which is to be *Consequent* on, and perhaps a little *Effected* by, the Destruction to come shortly on the present Church of *Rome*; in those, as well as in other Notable Things, it mentions matters, wherein the *Apostatical* Church of *Rome*, is in a peculiar manner concerned.

But *we* also are concerned in these Things; and *this Day*, Eminently concerned in the Text now to be considered.

The *Doctrinal* part of this Epistle, being dispatched in the first Eleven Chapters, the *Practical*, is comprized in the Five last; And this part, begins with a most Universal, & most Comprehensive *Exhortation*. Wherein we may note,

First, The *Matter* of the Advice. This is, That we do make our *Bodies*, which by a *Synecdoche*, implies our whole *Selves*, our *Souls*, our *Names*, our *Friends*, our *Estates*, and all our Interests, a *Sacrifice* unto God: which is done, in short, by Devoting them unto the Service of that God.

Next, The *Manner* of pressing it. This is, with, A Compellation, *Brethren*: An Obtestation, *I beseech you*; And a very weighty Argument, *By the Mercies of God*; that is to say, The *Mercies* of God lay upon us, a very powerful Obligation hereunto.

But we have not yet given the Text so particular an *Illustration*, as it seems to call for.

Know

Know then, That according to the Stricter Notion of a **Sacrifice**, its more general Distinction, is into *Propitiatory*, or *Eucharistical*. Now Christianity in that Notion admits but *One*, and this of the *former sort*; by which *One*, even *that of Himself*, our Lord *hath forever perfected them that are Sanctified*: He is a *Poor Priest*, who dreams of any other. We our selves, or any Things that we do, in *Religion*, are capable of being *Sacrifices*, only by way of *Analogy*, & that chiefly to the latter sort; *So*, we *offer up Spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. A *Sacrifice* here signifies no more, than a *Thing Devoted unto God*. But what are we thus to *Devote*? Our **Bodies**. Hereby we are to understand our *whole Selves*; but it is Expressed by, *Your Bodies*, for Distinction-sake: the *Bodies* of *Beasts* were heretofore Offered, and now we are to Offer up *Our own*. This is called, a **Living** *Sacrifice*, because the *Sacrifice* of old was to be brought *Alive* unto the Lord; the *Israelites* might not themselves *Eat* a thing *Dead* of it self, much less might they bring such a Thing to the *Living God*. And yet the Victim was to be *Slain*, in *Sacrificing*; which is here opposed, by an Intimation, that when we *Sacrifice* our *Bodies* to the Lord, they yet continue to *Live*: Our *Lives* will not be at all *Impaired*, by the commanded *Sacrifice* of our Bodies, no, they will be *Improved* by a wonderful *Sacredness* added thereunto. Our *Bodies* are to be an *Unbloody Sacrifice*: And yet the *Bodily Life* also is herein

but alluded unto: 'tis a further, an Higher, a Nobler *Living*, a *Living* unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that is here called for. **Holy**, is annexed without any Tautology; for though it be in our word, *Sacrifice*, it is not in the Greek word, ΘΥΣΙΑ. And beſides, the Real *Holineſs* or the Rectitude of Mind, and Walk, which attends our *Sacrificing* of our ſelves unto God, is here pointed at. What is *Holineſs*, but a *Devotion* of our ſelves unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt? This will be **Acceptable**. Indeed our *Sacrifice* becomes not *Acceptable By* this; and yet, it is *not* Acceptable *without* it: We have been told, that all our Sacrifices, are *Acceptable to God, by* **Jeſus Chriſt**. However, *Holineſs*, in the Nature of the Thing it ſelf, is *Well pleaſing* unto God. And, In all this there is a **Reaſonable Service**; This intimates the *Tranſcendency* of the *Sacrifice* required; they are not *Beaſts* but *Men*, that are to be a *Sacrifice*; and the Higheſt *Acts of Reaſon* too, are to be the Ingredients of the *Sacrifice*; and the *Right* of God hereunto is alſo ſignified; there is nothing ſo *Reaſonable*, as that we ſhould Offer our ſelves unto Him. 'Tis to be done with a **Preſentation**; we are to ſet our ſelves before God, as they did *Siſtere ad Altare*, the deſtined *Sacrifices*, making them *Stand* ready there for Immolation. The Reſult of all is,

That the **Mercy** *of God unto us, Very Strongly Obligeth us to* **Devote** *our ſelves unto the* **Service** *of God.* There

There are Two *Propositions* which we are here to Listen unto.

I. The First and Great *Obedience*, and the Summ and Substance of that *Obedience*, which we owe unto God, is the *Devotion* of our selves unto the Service of the Lord Jesus Christ. That we should *Serve* the God that made us, *This* is the Grand *End* for which we are made by God: Of mankind, it is by the Eternal Maker said, *This people have I formed for my self, they shall show forth my praise.* But it is the *Son* of God, who is that *Word* of God, of whom we are told, in Col. 1. 16. *All things were Created by Him, and for Him.* And the *Son* of God, who is also the *Son* of Man, *He* is that, *Heir* of God, and that *Lord* of All, concerning whom 'tis the *Will* of God, expressed, in Joh: 5 23. *That all men should Honour the Son, even as they Honour the Father.* The *Dues* which belong to God from us, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, our *Immanuel*, and our *God manifest in the Flesh*, is the more immediate Receiver of them. *He* hath a *Right* unto us, not only as He hath *Made* us, but as He hath *Bought* us too; & as we are directed, in Eph. 5. 20. *To give thanks unto God, and the Father, in the Name of our Lord* Jesus Christ; thus, our *Service* is then most agreeably and effectually yielded unto *God*, when we distinctly put the *Name* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST upon all, as being a *Service* intended for *Him* immediately. All the *Mercy* of God

unto us, comes thro' the Hand of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the *God man*, and the Mediator between *God* and *Man*. Hence, tho' it were an Impiety, to Exclude the Conſideration of God the *Father*, or of God the *Spirit*, in that *Service* which we are to render unto God for His *Mercy*, yet we then render it after the moſt *Chriſtian manner*, when we carry the Lord JESUS CHRIST in our Thoughts, as the next Object of it. Wherefore, in the Meditations which I am to give you, I ſhall ſtudy ſtill to inſert the *Name* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, as calling for that *Service*, which is to be done in the whole of our *Obedience* unto God. And this I do the rather, becauſe of a boiling Antipathy in my Soul, againſt the *Paganiſm* of thoſe Traitors unto the King of Heaven, who tho' they call themſelves *Divines*, yet would have their Sermons and Writings valued, for the ſame cauſe that Bleſſed *Auſtin* undervalued the Books of their Brother *Cicero*, *Quia Nomen Chriſti non eſt ibi*; the *Name* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST is not there. Nor indeed, would we be ſo profane, as to reckon it a *Battology*, or a *Superfluity*, in the *Fourteen Epiſtles* of *Paul*, that this deareſt Name occurrs four *hundred and fifty Times* therein, and no leſs than *ten Times* in the *Ten Firſt Verſes* to the *Corinthians*.

The Thing which I aſſert is, That the *Obedience* to God, which His Innumerable & Unparal-

parallellable *Mercies* unto us, do call for, is, That we *Devote* our ſelves unto the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST; who *to this End both Died and Roſe, that He might be the LORD of all.* To *Serve* the Lord JESUS CHRIST, what is that? Briefly, 'Tis to make fit *Acknowledgments* of His Infinite *Excellencies*, and bring others to join with us in making of ſuch *Acknowledgments.* It is to bear our *Teſtimonies* unto the *Truths* and unto the *Wayes* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and Conform our ſelves unto His *Will.* Now to *Devote* our ſelves hereunto, is our *Acceptable Sacrifice*; For we are aſſured, *He that Serveth Chriſt, is Acceptable to God.* And we are thus to proceed in our doing of it.

First, We are to be convinced and ſatisfied of this; That the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, is the moſt *Reaſonable Service.* The Lord JESUS CHRIST, is the *True God*, the *Great God*, the *Mighty God*, and *GOD over all, Bleſſed for ever.* The Lord JESUS CHRIST, is He, whom all the *Angels* adore, as the *Lord of Hoſts*, the Creator and Preſerver of the World; and the moſt High, *Poſſeſſor of Heaven and Earth.* The Lord JESUS CHRIST is He, to whom we are beholden for all the *Good* Things that ever we do enjoy. HE particularly, tho' He were *Equal with God*, nevertheleſs *Took on Him the Form of a Servant*, for our Good. Upon the view of all this, we are to pro-

nounce

nounce it infinitely *Reaſonable*, that we ſhould for ever be the *Devoted Servants* of ſuch a Lord. But the Benefits of *Redemption* which we have by our Lord JESUS CHRIST, are to have a very particular conſideration, among the *Reaſons* of our *Serving* Him. If we *Serve* Him not, we *Deny the Lord that Bought us.*

We are hereupon to *Diſlike*, and *Renounce* every *Service* inconſiſtent with that of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. The propoſals which thoſe Helliſh *Taskmaſters*, the FLESH, the WORLD, and the DEVIL, make unto us, we ſhould Reject with all poſſible Abhorrence; and be altogether impatient of the *Drudgeries*, which we undergo, while we are under their Direction.

We are herewithal to *Reſolve* that the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, ſhall with His Aſſiſtences, be our Everlaſting Employment. It is not a *Cold Aſſent*, but a *Full purpoſe of Heart*, with which we are to *Cleave unto the Lord.* And with a Reſolution to undergo all the *Self-denial* therein called for, we muſt be able to ſay, *Lord, I have inclined my Heart, to perform thy Statutes alwayes, even unto the End.*

We are herein to give the full conſent of our Souls unto the *New Covenant*, wherein our *Bonds* to the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST are to be Signed by us. In the *Covenant of Graee*, it is demanded of us, whether we are willing that the Lord JESUS CHRIST, ſhould

should Enstate us in the *Favour* of God, by the vertue of His *Obedience* and *Intercession*, and by His Gracious Influences Enable us, as persons *United* unto Himself, to *Glorify* God for ever, and by His own Divine Methods, both *Instruct* us, and *Incline* us, to come at that Final Blessedness? And whether we are willing to Express our *Thankfulness* unto Him, for Delivering us from Spiritual and Eternal Miseries, by sincere Endeavours to *Serve* Him in *Holiness* and *Righteousness* all our Dayes? We are now to give up our selves unto the Lord JESUS CHRIST, by declaring our most Hearty *Consent* unto this *COVENANT*, in all the Terms of it. Our *Baptismal Vow* is thus to be Renewed, by our Professing in the most early years of our *Youth* and *Choice*, That we do for ever approve of the *Dedication* to the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, which was visibly passed upon us in our Infancy.

And finally, We are now to Study, how to Improve our *All*, for the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST; that He may have Revenues of Glory out of *All*. Having said with *Joshua*, *I will Serve the Lord*, we are to say unto our Lord JESUS CHRIST, as one once more improperly did unto another King, *I am thine, my Lord, O King, and all that I have.* It was required, in 1 Cor. 6. 20. *Glorify God in your Bodies, and in your Spirits, which are His.* Yea, It was required, in 1 Cor. 10. 30. *Whether ye*

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Eat or Drink, or whatever ye do, Do all to the Glory of God. Thus, whatever does in any Regard belong unto us, we ſhould by our *Conſecration* thereof unto the Lord JESUS CHRIST, be able to ſay, *This belongs unto the Lord!* When any Tempters do Sollicit us, to abuſe any thing that we have unto the *Diſhonour* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, we ſhould Reply with Indignation, *How ſhall I do this Wickedneſs, and Sin againſt the Lord; the Lord whoſe I am, and whom I am to Serve?* Inſtead thereof, All the *Powers* of our *Spirits*, our Underſtandings, our Fantaſies, our Memories, our Wills, our Affections, are to be at work for the Lord JESUS CHRIST continually; All the *Members* of our *Bodies*, our Eyes, our Ears, our Tongues, our Hands and our Feet, are to be at work for the Lord JESUS CHRIST perpetually. All our *Poſſeſſions*, are to have, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, written on them; and we are to put them unto no uſe, but what may be for the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Our *Actions*, every Day, ſhould be Ennobled with Deliberate Thoughts, of *Glorifying the Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, in what we do. Yea, we ſhould be able to ſay, with the Apoſtle, in Phil. 1. 21. *To me to Live is Chriſt*; by Spending our *Lives* in the *Service* of our Lord. It is *thus*, that we are to *Preſent our ſelves a Sacrifice* unto Him, that once made Himſelf a *Sacrifice* for us!

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II. The *Mercy* of God unto us, is that which very Strongly *Obliges* us to this *Obedience.*

Very Various are the Courſes taken by the God of Heaven, to Produce and Procure from us, that *Service* which we are to *Honour* our Lord JESUS CHRIST withal. 'Tis the *Voice* both of His *Ordinances* and of His *Providences*, *Let men Serve the Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *and in all Things Obey the Will of that Glorious Lord.* But the *Mercies* of God have this in a moſt particular manner, for the Language & the Errand of them. *Gratitude*, as one ſays, *Like the Blood in the Body, runs through the whole Practice of Chriſtianity.* The whole of that *Obedience* which we render unto God, is to be a continued Expreſſion of *Gratitude* unto Him. Thus the *Schoolmen* make *Ingratitude*, a *General Circumſtance of ſin*; inaſmuch as though it be not in the *Definition* of *ſin*, yet it is alwayes in the *Perpetration* of it.

It has been ſometimes a Queſtion very unſafely handled in the Books of ſome Engliſh Writers, *What place in the Chriſtian Religion is to be aſſigned unto Evangelical Obedience?* Now we are not ſo groſsly Ignorant of the *Goſpel*, as to aſſert, *That our Hearty and Honeſt Endeavour of Obeying the whole Will of God, is the condition upon which the Benefits purchaſed by Chriſt, belong unto us.* God forbid, that we ſhould Swallow down all the *Poiſon* Comprehended in that Aſſertion! We ſay, The only *Condition* on our part, Entitling us to the *Benefits Purchaſed* by our

our *Lord-Redeemer*, is our *Faith* in Him, or the *Reliance* of our Souls upon the *Free-Grace* of God, in Him alone, for the Communication of thoſe *Benefits*. And, *Aliter qui vadit, Cadit* ! But then, the *Place* which we aſſign unto *Evangelical Obedience*, is, that of *Gratitude* unto God, for the *Benefits* of *Redemption*; and we think, that the *Principle* which diſpoſes us to *Believe* on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and on His *Righteouſneſs*, will alſo diſpoſe us to *an Hearty and Honeſt Endeavour of Obeying the whole will of God*, in *Gratitude* unto Him, for what Proviſion He ha's made for our *Happineſs* in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. The Connexion between *Juſtifying Faith* and *Obedience*, Holy, Sincere, Thankful *Obedience*, is Infallible, and Inſeparable; though we ſay likewiſe, that no man can do any Good Works of *Obedience*, until he be *Juſtified*. Nor does this place of *Gratitude* for our *Happineſs*, which we aſſign to *Obedience*, hinder us, from Conſidering it, as the *Way* to our *Happineſs*, Yea, as a *Part* of our *Happineſs*. There is no true Believer, who is not of this Perſwaſion, *I am an Happy man, if I may but Serve my Lord* Jeſus Chriſt.

Indeed, Every *Mercy* of God unto us, calls for this Return. Almighty God therein does as he ſpeaks, in Hoſ. 11. 3. *I drew them with the Cords of a man, with Bands of Love; I Laid meat unto them.* When He diſpenſes Kindneſſes unto men, He propounds this as a Reaſonable

sonable Expectation thereupon, *These Kindnesses are to be attractive of their Obedience; Inferiour Creatures are Serviceable unto their Keepers, their Feeders, those that Lay meat unto them: and by doing thus for the Children of men, I do with Cords and Bands oblige them to Serve me for ever.* Let us maintain this Truth, with a treble *Demonstration.*

First; We have the *Lessons* of *Scripture*, to show, That the *Mercy* of God, obliges our *Obedience* to Him. The *Scripture* seems to put this *Motto* on every *Mercy* that we Receive, *A strong Obligation to Serve the Lord Jesus Christ.* Thus, When the Church of *Israel* received the *Mercy* of a mighty Deliverance, from woful Circumstances, what *Use* did their most Merciful Deliverer make of all? It was, A Demand of *Obedience* to all His Commandments. This is the Preface to both Tables of the Law, *I am the Lord your God, that have brought you out of your Distresses, and now surely you can deny me no Obedience.* And when Ten Thousand further *Mercies* had been shown to the People of God, this was the Inference deduced from them; *Let these be acknowledged, with an Obedience answerable thereunto*: Thus you have it, in Deut. 10. 12. *Now,* (after all) *What does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to Fear Him, to Love Him, to Serve Him, and to Obey Him?* This was what *Samuel* once Preached unto a Great Congregation; in 1 Sam. 12. 20. *Only Fear*

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the Lord, and Serve Him, for conſider how great Things He hath done for you. This was what *Paul* has written to us all, in Rom. 2. 4. *The Goodneſs of God, O man, Leads thee to Repentance.* And Symphonizing with all this, what ſays the Pſalmiſt, in Pſal. 130. 4. *There is Forgiveneſs with thee, O Lord, that thou mayſt be feared?* Even ſo, we ſhall conclude but *Scripturally*, if we ſay, *We have all Mercies from thee, O Lord, that thou mayſt be Obeyed.* Unto this purpoſe, it has been Remark'd, that when God had carried *Iſrael* over *Jordan*, there were *Stones* Erected for His *Praiſe*: But what was inſcribed on the *Stones*? It was not the Hiſtory of what had been done by God; but it was a *Copy of the Law*. An Intimation, that our *Keeping of the Law*, is to be no ſmall Ingredient in our *Praiſing* of Him, that gave the *Law*; our *Keeping of the Law* is the Return that we are to make unto Him that has carried us well through our *Jordans*.

Secondly; We have the *Complaints* of *Heaven*, to ſhow, That the *Mercy* of God obliges our *Obedience* to Him. *Heaven* takes it unkindly, if we don't ſee an *Obligation to Serve the Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, in every *Mercy*. It was the Expoſtulation of a provoked God, in Iſa. 1. 2. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth*: Summoned they all are, to make *Men* Aſhamed: Why, What's the matter? Alas, *The Lord hath ſpoken, I have nouriſhed & brought*

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as *Children, and they have Rebelled against me.* How bitterly 'tis Complained of, That *Mercy* should be bestowed upon us, and we not Return *Obedience* to the *God of our Mercy*! It is mentioned as a Provoking Evil, in *Hezekiah*, who was otherwise a Godly man: in 2 Chron. 32.25. *He rendred not again, according to the Benefit done unto him, therefore was wrath upon him.* And it is mentioned as a Provoking Evil, in *Israel*, on a Day of Humiliation, in Neh. 9. 35. *They have not Served thee, O Lord, in thy Great Goodness, which thou gavest them.* So we see, That when a *Benefit* shall be done unto us, by the *Great Goodness* of God, and we don't *render this again*, that we shall *Serve* Him who gives all, the *Wrath* of God, is Enkindled upon such a *Provocation.*

Thirdly; The utmost *Obedience* were due to God, though He should never confer any *Mercy* at all upon us. Truly, such is the *Sovereignty*, such is the *Authority*, of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, that if HE say, *Let such a Service be done for me!* No man may dispute it: And, such are His *Essential Perfections*, that He will remain Worthy of all *Service* from us, though we were every one of us, Damned, among the Outcasts, in the lowest Hell forever: 'Tis from the Unreasonableness of Mankind, that there is any cause given for that Complaint, *Vix diligitur Jesus Propter Jesum*: Scarce is JESUS Loved and Served, for the pure sake of JESUS. Let

the moſt miſerable man, under the whole Cope of Heaven, keep *Serving* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST unto Eternal Ages; Yet he muſt own, as in Luk. 17. 10. *I have done but that which was my Duty to do.* If God ſhould ſtrip us immediately of all our Deſireable Things, and caſt us into the diſmal ſhadows of the Second Death forever, we ought ſtill to ſay, *The Holy God ſtill deſerves all the Obedience that I can poſſibly yield unto Him.* The *Greatneſs* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST renders Him worthy of all our *Service*, though we ſhould have no particular motive of His *Goodneſs* unto us, to invite us thereunto. 'Tis ſaid in Pſal. 145. *Great is the Lord, & Greatly to be Praiſed.* So I ſay, *Great is the Lord, and Greatly to be Served.* It was a ſweet ſpeech that fell from the Pen of the Renowned Chancellour of *Paris*, *I don't know what the Lord intends to do with me forever; but this I know,* (Amari Dignus eſt et Coli) *He is worthy that I ſhould Love Him & Serve Him; and I will do ſo.* Though we were horribly bruiſed between the formidable Milſtones of the Anger of God in the place of Dragons forever, yet it would become us ever to put this Accent on our Endleſs Lamentations, *Yet This God is to be Obeyed!* But what an *Additional Obligation to Obedience*, is by His *Mercy* then laid upon us? Let us now make ſome

APPLICATION.

I. There are *Two Things*, which, methinks, now,

now have a very Scandalous Face upon them. Two Faults will fall under a Sharp *Reproof*. I am now to tell you,

First, It is an *Ill Thing*, to be nothing the *Better* for all the *Mercies* of God. Alas, How many of us will be found Guilty of this monstrous *Disingenuity*! Man, of whose *Tender Mercy* is it, that thou art not *Consumed*! whose *Mercy* ha's been *Feeding*, and *Cloathing*, and *Supplying*, and *Preserving*, and *Advancing* of thee, these many years? But art thou not as *Disobedient* unto the *God* of all this *Mercy*, as thou wast many years ago? Oh, Examine thy self; *Have I done any more Service to the Lord Jesus Christ, for all that Goodness & Mercy, with which He is daily following of me?* Now be we astonished at our own *Unfruitfulness*! It was a most *Unrighteous* Thing in *Jeshurun*, to give the Lord any Occasion to say, as in Deut. 32.15. *Thou hast waxed Fat, and Kicked, & forsook the God that made thee.* It was a most *Unlovely* Thing in *David*, that the Lord should have have any Occasion to say, as in 2 Sam. 12.9. *I have done much for Thee; Wherefore hast thou despised the Commandment of the Lord?* Let us with Trembling Souls, think, whether we shall not bring a *Curse* on our selves, by such a *Barrenness*?

But, Secondly, 'Tis a *Worse Thing* then, to be the *Worse* for the *Mercies* of God. Some there are, who make the *Mercies* of God, the

Occasion, yea, the *Instruments*, of their *Sin* against Him. There are *Spiders*, whom the *Grace* of God, Emboldens in *Impiety* and *Impenitency*: they Cavil after this rate, *God Almighty is ready to Pardon, and why may not I allow my self in some Transgressions of His Law?* The Apostle *Jude* hath flashed the hottest Brimstone of Hell, in the faces of those *Reprobates*; and indeed, Whatever Sins a *Regenerate* man may fall into, it will not be Improper at least for the Sinner himself to count it questionable, Whether any *Regenerate* man can Deliberately thus, *Turn the Grace of God into Wantonness*. And what shall be said of them, who take *Encouragement* from their *Prosperity*, to Wallow Securely in those filthy puddles of Death, which they would otherwise be afraid of plunging themselves into? Say, Would you not be more *Prayerful*, and more *Careful*, in all your ways, and more Studious to *Serve* the Lord JESUS CHRIST, if you were under those *Deadly Bands*, which ly upon such, or such of your Neighbours? *Conscience*, Do thy Office! Is there no Person among us, who has had, not only a *Life*, but a *New Life*, and a *Life* Sweetned with many Conveniencies, given to him? And yet, how does he now carry himself? Does not he *Live* more Carnally, more Worldlily, more Vainly, than he did before? Is he not like the Jewes, who having made their *Offerings* in the Temple said,

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We are now acquitted to do all Abominations, and run upon a New Score of Sinning? Yea, How common a Thing is it, for Persons to make the *Mercies* of God, the meer *Fuel* of their *Lusts*? It was the Crime of them, in Hos. 2. 8. *The Corn and Wine which I gave them, did they prepare for Baal.* Thus it may be said of many, They would be less Wicked, if it were not for the *Mercies* which God *gives* unto them. Now, what an horrid thing is this? If *David* should have taken the *Sword* and the *Bow* that *Jonathan* gave him, and presently have Stab'd or Shot the Donour with it, would it not have been a most Villanous Act? But be it known to you, That you are *Fighting against God*, with Weapons of *His own*; yea, you are fighting for the *Devil* with them. Oh! Think of this, and Blush at the *Horrible Thing*.

II. But there is an *Exhortation* to be now pressed upon us; That the *Mercy* of God may now *Cause* us to do, what it *Calls* us to do. *I Beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God*, that you be thence prevailed withal, to become the *Devoted Servants* of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all *New Obedience*, which is to *Present your selves a Sacrifice unto Him.* The *Africans* of old, would foolishly Worship the Creatures which did them any *Benefit*, as our *Americans* at this Day do the *Fire*, because of the Singular *Benefit* which they have therefrom. Yea, the Peo-

ple of *Troas* worſhipped the very *Mice*, becauſe they had received a notable *Benefit* by an Army of *Mice*, gnawing aſunder the *Bow Strings* of their Enemies. But how unnatural then, will it be for *us*, to forget the *Benefits* done to us by our Lord JESUS CHRIST, or to decline the *Service* of Him that has done the *Benefits*: Indeed we cannot requite the *Mercy* of God unto us, by doing of any thing that ſhall be for His Advantage. Tho' the parts of *Thankfulneſs* are well diſtributed by *Aquinas*, into *Recognition*, and *Valuation*, and *Retribution*, of the Divine *Benefits*; Yet, for this laſt point of *Thankfulneſs*, if the Son of *Sirach* might juſtly ſay, *How canſt thou Recompenſe thy Parents, the things they have done for thee?* Much more may we ſay, *'Tis impoſſible for us to Recompenſe our Saviour, the things He hath done for us*: And the Light of Nature it ſelf dictates, as *Bellarmine* himſelf allows, That no man can, *Paria reddere Deo*; or, make *Equal Returns* unto the Lord. We muſt ſay to our God, as in Pſal. 16. 2. *My Goodneſs extendeth not unto thee.* Nevertheleſs there are ſome Things, which the Lord graciouſly calls *Retributions*; and thoſe are the *Fruits* of *Obedience*, which the Showers of *Mercy* falling upon us, from Heaven do beſpeak our yielding of. The *Mercie* of God is the Tillage which He Employes upon us; O *Earth, Earth, Earth, Hear the Word of the Lord!* Now the *Retributions* which we are to make unto Him, are thoſe which

which the Apostle mentions, in Phil. 1. 11. *The Fruits of Righteousness, which are unto the Glory and Praise of God.* Wherefore, *I beseech you, Brethren,* to Consider such Things as these.

Consider, First, There are *many,* there are *mighty,* there are most *Undeserved Mercies,* which we have Received from the *Open Hand* of our God. There is no Comfortable Thing at any Time Enjoy'd by us, but what comes unto us, from the Hand of God in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Verily, we must call Him, as in Psal. 59. 17. *The God of our Mercy.* But oh! how much of His *Mercy,* are we on every side surrounded withal! There are *General Mercies,* wherein we all have our share. As we are *Englishmen,* we are Born to those *Rights,* which are preferrible to the *Best Estates* that can be acquired among any other Nations upon Earth. But as we are *New-Englanders,* we have our further *Privileges,* which no People under the Sun, out of *New England* have. Here are things, whereof we may say, as the Jewish *Rabbi* said of *Liberty, If the Heavens were Parchment, and the Seas were Ink, they would not suffice to Write the Praises due to God, on the account thereof.* But besides, and above, and beyond, these *Liberties,* we have the *Liberties* of the *Gospel* too, (the *Mercies* in the Text now before us most peculiarly referr'd unto!) in some Circumstances, which may cause us to sing, as in Psal. 147. 20. *God hath not dealt so with any Nation.* But then,

there are *Perſonal Mercies* alſo, wherein all of us may Rejoice. We have our *Common Mercies*: the *Mercies* which attended our *Infancy*, and *Education*: the *Mercies* of the *Proviſion* hitherto made for all our *Neceſſities*: the *Mercies* of our *Preſervations* from *Dangers* whereto we have often been Expoſed: the *Mercies* of the *Relations*, which *God has graciouſly given* to us; *Mercies* whereof we may ſay, as in Lam. 3. 22. *The Lords Mercies are New to us every morning.* We have our *Special Mercies* too. It may be, *Temporal Mercies* are heaped upon us, with ſuch *Loads*, as to diſtinguiſh us from, to dignifie us above, others round about us: Oh! compare our caſe, with the caſe of *others*, known to us, of whom we do not know, but that *we* have Sinned much more than *they*; and ſay, as in Pſal. 16. 6. *I have a Goodly Heritage.* Yea, but we have our *Spiritual Mercies*, to be Celebrated with the peculiar *Hallelujahs* of our *Spirits*. Our Everlaſting *Salvation* is contrived in our Lord JESUS CHRIST: and in purſuance of that *Salvation*, our Lord has complied with all the Humbling Things, which the *Juſtice* of God required of our *Surety*: and that *Great Salvation* is Revealed and Offered unto *us*, and the *Spirit* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST hath been ſavingly Operating upon us, to make us Accept of that *Salvation*, and to Apply that *Salvation* unto us for-ever. Oh! ſay with a *Spirit Rejoycing in God our Saviour*, as in Luc. 1. 78. *Thro' the*

the Tender mercy of our God, the Day Spring from on High hath visited us. Now, have we *Deserved* these *Mercies?* No, Not one of them. What are we, but the *Dogs*, that never merited a *Crumb* of all the Bounty that is fallen to us? We are *Undeserving*, and *Ill-deserving*, and *Hell-deserving* Wretches; and we must own, as in Gen. 32. 10. *Lord, I am not worthy of the Least, of all thy Mercies, which thou hast shewed unto thy Servant!*

Consider, Secondly: All the *Return* that we can make unto God for His *Mercies*, is our *Obedience*, in the *Service* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. If we would ask, and Oh! Let us ask, that convenient Question, *What are the Thanks that our God would have of us, for all His Mercies?* The Reply must be, *Become the Servants of the Lord* Jesus Christ, *and Obey Him with Universal Holiness.* Or, we may take an Answer from Tit. 2. 10. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, teacheth us, to Deny all Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and Live Soberly, and Righteously, and Godlily.* It is worth noting, how those Two Bad Qualities, are joyned, in 2 Tim. 3. 2. *Unthankful, Unholy.* If men be not *Holy*, they are not *Thankful.* Do we Dream, that our Allsufficient God will expect from us, *Thousands of Rams, and Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oyl*, by way of *Thankfulness* for His *Mercies?* No, He only says, *Be you my Servants; Live unto me, while you Live upon me, Obey me by Doing*

ing of Justice, and Loving of Mercy, and Walking Humbly before me, and I have enough. It was most ingenuously spoken, by the Dying Martyr, *Alas, I have only two Brass Farthings for my Lord* **Jesus Christ**, *a sorry Body, and a sinful Soul: if He, to whom I am infinitely Endebted, will accept of these, He shall have them with all my Heart.* Even so ought we to say; *We are an Insolvent, a Desperate, sort of Debtors unto God; we never can pay Him any thing proportionable to what we have Received from Him; but if the unwearied Service of my Obedience may be acceptable to Him, I shall be glad; He shall have That, while I have any Being.*

Consider, Thirdly: If we do not Return the *Service* of *Obedience* unto the Lord JESUS CHRIST for His *Mercies*, we are chargeable with an odious *Ingratitude*; and *Ingratitude* is indeed the most *odious* thing Imaginable. We say, *Ingratum dixeris; et omnia dixeris*: As Good call a man, a *Viper*, or the Detestablest Thing you can imagine, as to say, *He is Unthankful!* I remember, the Prophecy concerning the Return of the *Israelitish* Nation to a good State in the *Latter Dayes*, Expresses it so, in Hos. 3.5. *They shall Fear the Lord, and His Goodness*; that is, as a Converted Jew teaches me to Expound it, the *Messiah*, the *Good Thing* promised in the *Eighty Fifth Psalm.* Syrs, Our Lord JESUS CHRIST, is a Lord so *Good*, that He is *Goodness* it self; and how *Ungrateful* are we, if we

do

do not *Serve* such a *Lord*! A *Slave*, that shall have his *Meat*, his *Drink*, his *Cloathing* and *Lodging* from a Good Master, is to be *Beaten with many Stripes*, if he be not like the Servant, of whom the Centurion his Master, said, *I say to him, Do this, and he doth it*. It was a Custom even among the *Heathen*, as our Lord Himself observes, that such as were their *Benefactors*, (their *Baal-Hanans*, and their *Hannibals*, their *Gracious-Lords*) they would make them their Governours, and Swear *Allegiance* unto them. And shall we then refuse to Serve our Lord in Heaven, the Lord of Heaven, who supplies all our wants, and is our *Benefactor* every moment? The Prophet *Elisha*, in 2 King. 4. 13. thought it would have been a breach of *Good Manners*, if he had not asked a Courteous Hostess, *Behold, thou hast been careful of us; What shall be done for thee?* Surely then, we should say with ourselves, *What shall be done, what Service is there to be done for the Lord* JESUS CHRIST, *who has been always careful of me?* What a sordid man, was that *Egyptian* Butler, who *forgat* the *Joseph*, that had been so useful unto him? And is it not as vile a thing for us to Forget the *God of our Lives?* It was a base Temper that *Nabal* show'd, when *David* must say of him, in 1 Sam. 25. 11. *in vain have I kept all that this Fellow hath*. And shall our Lord say of us. *In vain have I thrown away all my Mercies upon such a Sinner: He is a meer Grave to my Mercies: He'l*

do no Service for me, Let me do never ſo much for Him. Syrs, the Lord will by dreadful Diſpenſations, give us to underſtand, that He *does nothing in vain.* Oh! Let not that check belong unto us, in Deut. 32. 6. *Do ye thus Requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe!*

Conſider, Fourthly; All *the Service* wherein we *Obey* the Lord JESUS CHRIST, for the Requital of His *Mercies,* will be as *profitable* to our ſelves, as *acceptable* to the Lord. Certainly, we ſhall not Loſe by it! No, It will iſſue in the *Continuation,* and the *Augmentation* of our *Mercies.* As among men, 'tis a Delight unto us, to Do good unto the *Thankful*; So will the Bleſſed God ſay, *My Mercies are well beſtow'd upon ſuch a man; he ſhall have them ſtill, he ſhall have more of them, he ſhall have as much as Heart can wiſh.* Behold, how we may prevent the Loſs of our *Precious and Pleaſant Things.* Let us do *Service* for the Lord JESUS CHRIST, with what we have: So our *Talents* will not be taken from us. Let us be *Tenants,* that ſhall honeſtly pay the little *Rents* required of us, and we ſhall not be Turned out of all. And what a *Sign* ſhall we therein have of our *Sincerity* before the Lord? An *Hypocrite* will ſometimes abſtain from Evil, for fear of *Rods* and *Blowes.* Oh! but when a man is marvellouſly quickned unto the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, by the Smiles of the Lord upon him, there is a moſt hopeful mark of *Uprightneſs* upon the Soul of ſuch a man.

Well,

Well, These Things being thus *Considered*, there are some Things, which I desire we may now find our selves disposed unto.

First, Let us very particularly *Ponder* the *Mercies* of God unto us, in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Retire, & Look *back*, & Look *round*, upon the Multifarious Loving kindness of our God unto us. As *Ahashuerus* in Est. 6. 1. called for the *Records*, wherein he found Great Things that had been done for him; So let Us cast an Eye into the *Records*, which we *Do*, or *Should* keep, of the Great Things that God hath done for us. Oh! Let us make a *Catalogue*, as far as we can, of our *Mercies*: Nor indeed can we easily leave, a better *Legacy* to our *Families*, than such a *Catalogue* of our *Ebenezers*, of our Experiences.

Secondly, Let us very particularly *Purpose* the *Service* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, for, and with, His *Mercies*. Retire, and put that Interrogatory unto our selves, in Psal. 116. 12. *What shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits?* And pursuant hereunto, Let us choose to be the *Servants* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in all *Holy Conversation*. Imitate that Prince *Cantacuzanus*, who giving up himself unto the Lord JESUS CHRIST, would afterwards have his Name Changed into *Christodulus*, or, *A Servant of Christ*. I tell you, Great Emperors were not the Smaller for Subscribing themselves, *The Vassals*, of this Lord. Yea, Let us often have

have our Explicit *Contrivances*, how to Glorify and Magnify *God our Saviour*. 'Tis a Noble Question, that we should sometimes put unto our selves, *What special Service may I do for my Lord* Jesus Christ, *as I Stand in such a Relation, or such a Capacity?* And in Answer to this Question, some singular ways to *Do Good*, will doubtless occur unto us.

Finally, Let us Resign up our selves unto the *Spirit* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, that by His Influences, we may *Present our selves a Living Sacrifice, Holy, and Acceptable unto God*. We can do nothing of our selves, in this *Reasonable Service*: but if once the *Spirit* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST shall take *Possession* of us, we shall then *Serve* Him faithfully, *Serve* Him fervently, *Serve* Him constantly; and be *for Him, and not for another*. In allusion to the old usage of Masters *Branding* their Servants, it was usual for the ancient Idolaters, to *Brand* themselves for the perpetual Service of the *Idol* whereto they were devoted, with such Marks as are forbidden in *Leviticus*. They sometimes *Branded* themselves, with the *Mark* of their *Idol*, as an *Helmet* was the *Mark* of *Mars*, and the *Ivy* was the *Mark* of *Bacchus*. They sometimes *Branded* themselves with the *Name* of their *Idol*; as, *Jupiter*, or the like, at large. And they sometimes *Branded* themselves with the *Number* of his *Name*; that is, with other *Letters* which together would amount unto the same

ſame *Number* with the known Letters of his *Name*, agreed Privately among the fraternity, to ſignify *So*. I will not Report what ſome Zealous Perſons among the People of God, in the Primitive Times, did in Oppoſition hereunto. But this I ſay; Lying at the Foot of Soveraign Grace, Let us, give up our ſelves to the *Free Spirit* of the Lord JESUS CHRIST; and that *Spirit* will Effectually *Mark* us, and *Hold* us, to *Service* of that Lord Eternally. Come then, Let us Lay our ſelves in the Duſt, at the Feet of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and ſay before Him; *Lord, I would gladly be Thine, and there is infinite Reaſon that I ſhould be ſo forever. Oh! how wonderful will be my Happineſs, and If thou wilt accept me to Serve thy Glorious Intereſts! Behold, I here Devote my ſelf, and all that I am, and all that I have, unto thy Glory? But I am able to do nothing: Wherefore, Oh! give me that Good Spirit of thine, which thou haſt Promiſed unto them that ask it. Let that Spirit Seize me, fill me, act me, and make me an Inſtrument of thy Glory for ever.*

Whatever ha's been done by the *Mercies* of God, for the man who does thus, I ſay, *Believeſt Thou? Thou ſhalt ſee yet greater Things than Ever.*

But it is Time to break off. We will now make an *Echo* to the Calls of Heaven which we have thus had,

I Beſeech you, by the Mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies, a Living Sacrifice, Holy, Acceptable to God, your Reaſonable Service;

By

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By Digesting it into an *Hymn*, which may help to carry on the *Thanksgiving* wherein we are Engaged

THE *Mercies* of Almighty God
To miserable *Me*,
Purchas'd by His most precious Blood,
Are, Oh! how *Rich* and *Free!*
Mercies, which Answer and Remove
All my just *Miseries:*
Mercies, Well-worth my Praise and Love,
And *Thankful Sacrifice.*
Behold, O *Gracious Lord*, I do
Present my self to Thee:
No *Beasts*, but my *Own Body* to
My God, shall *Off'red* be.
A *Body*, by the *Death* of *Thine*
For *Thee* full dearly Bought,
To *Thee*, with Every Thing of mine,
Is now Sincerely brought.
My *Living Body* Off'red here
So does continue Still;
Oh! may it *Live*, Thy *Name* to Fear,
And still to Do Thy *Will.*
May, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD,
On all I do in *It*,
According to Thy *Holy* Word,
Be now most Plainly Writ.
May I, the *Pleasing* of *Thee*, make
My daily care *therein*,
And never any *Pleasure* take
Defil'd with Loathsome *Sin.*
Lord, Let me thus my *Reason* use
In Off'ring Thee *Thy Own*:
'Tis all *Right Reason* I should choose
To be *Thine*, *Thine* alone.

FINIS.